

March 3, 2011

To: Appropriations Committee

My name is Monica Bowman-Claudio. I am an active voter, wife, and mother of three children, home owner, and a resident of Connecticut for thirty years. I was born and raised in Puerto Rico and my family moved into Hartford, CT when I was in Middle School. I graduated from Bulkeley High School in Hartford and got my degree in Social Work at Central Connecticut State University. I have been employed by the state of Connecticut's Department of Children and Families (DCF) as a Juvenile Parole Officer for almost sixteen years. I am giving my testimonial in opposition of DCF's budget proposal to reduce Juvenile Parole Staff by eliminating twenty-two positions. This is Governor Malloy's budget proposal in his Budget Summary under the Department of Children and Families on page B-140 "Recommended Significant Changes".

It would be easy to explain the devastating effect that laying-off workers would have on our own families. For a moment, let's forget what our families would lose and let's think of the even greater effect that these job losses will be to the families that we give our services to. The decrease numbers in staff will affect the quality contact with our clients. This is not considering the expected increase of numbers through Raise the Age legislation: 16 year olds are considered juveniles since January 2011 and 17 year olds will take in effect in July 2012. This proposal does not consider current staff changes or changes in staffing due to planned retirements. The proposed numbers are based on 2009 staff and numbers. In 2009, we had 47 Parole Officers/Social Workers and 10 Parole/Social Work Supervisors. Since that time, we have lost 8 Parole Officers and one Supervisor position. That leaves us 39 Parole Officers and 9 Supervisors to cover the entire State of Connecticut.

Our Juvenile Parole Staff is serving high-risk youth who are having or have had difficulties adapting to a society who are seeking only the highly skilled and highly trained high school and college graduates. Our Juvenile Parole Staff is well-trained to help these young people transition back into society. These youth have come to us after multiple attempts to keep them in their community by Juvenile Probation Officers. Once the Judges commits them to DCF as delinquents they are court ordered to more restricted programs, whether residential care or Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS) for more intense treatment. Our goals are to reunify these youth with their guardians as soon as possible, get them back into their community school, and provide them with wrap around community services to continue to address the youth issues and even family issues. In many cases, we are the ones who help these young people and their families along the right path to maturity and to be able to become responsible adults. We as Parole Officers are the Case Managers of these DCF committed delinquent youths from day one until the end of their court order commitment. In most cases, we become the most consistent person in their lives throughout their whole commitment. This is very unique in our department, comparing to the DCF CPS side where one client sometimes would have multiple workers throughout their commitments. The ability for us to keep the same case throughout their entire commitment helps us develop a closer bond and trust with the youth and families. These relationships help our clients be more receptive to their treatment. Our role is extremely

important to these youth, since we are trying to prevent them to transfer into the adult system. Our goal is to rehabilitate these youth and avoid getting sent into the Department of Corrections to become another statistic in their system. Dealing with our delinquent youths is not an easy job. Personally, I have been assaulted by being hit, kicked, and spit on, only to see some of these young people turn the corner to be respectful to adults and be better role models in their community.

There is no other group who are better prepared to do this job as we are. Surely with all the great minds of the people we have voted for and the great minds of the people who have been appointed by them to come up with solutions, there must be a better way to handle this situation. Why can't we all put our heads together to find a better solution?

Thank you for taking your valuable time to read my testimony against the DCF Proposal to cut twenty-two Juvenile Parole Staff.

Sincerely,

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